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ABSTRACT

A 353 demonstration project was conducted in the Lancaster, Pennsylvania, area to provide adult literacy students with information concerning voting in local, state, and national elections. The project had two components: (1) development and presentation of a series of three learner voting workshops; and (2) creation and presentation of a hands-on learning situation in which voting is simulated. All sessions were nonpartisan and stressed being an informed voter. The target audience was the 450 adult learners served by the Lancaster-Lebanon Literacy Council, 350 of whom were not registered to vote. Approximately 40-50 students participated in each workshop, and more than 100 new voters were registered. In addition, some of the students decided to become more active in the political process, especially regarding literacy issues. Workshop participants were very favorable when asked to evaluate the sessions. (The report includes workshop materials.) (KC)

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ED 367 888

FINAL REPORT

Project Learn to Vote

A 353 SPECIAL PROJECT

#98-3042
June 1993

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Abstract <<<

ABSTRACT PAGE

Title: Project Learn to Vote

Project No.: 98-3042 **Funding:** $5,000

Project Director: Mary Hohensee **Phone No.:** (717) 295-5523

Agency Address: 38 West King St., Lancaster, PA 17603

Description:

A project designed to provide adult literacy students with information concerning voting in local, state, and national elections. The project had two components. 1) Development of learner voting workshops. 2) Creation of a hands-on learning situation in which voting is simulated. All sessions were non partisan and stressed being an informed voter.

Objectives:

Project Learn to Vote

1) developed a series of workshops pertaining to various aspects of the voting process and register those who wish to be registered.
2) conducted a "hands-on" session in which learners practiced the mechanics of voting.

Target Audience:

The target audience was our student population of 450 adult learners. Approximately 350 students are unregistered.

Product(s)--if applicable:

Hand-out package for learners who were unable to attend workshops.

Method(s) of Evaluation:

Formal evaluations were completed by all workshop participants. In May, at a "follow-up meeting", students discussed what they had learned and the experience of being a voting citizen.

Findings:

We found that students enjoyed and e willing to take part in sessions that did not specify "literacy" as part of the session. This project had much better participation than previous attempts to bring students together.

Conclusions:

The value in this project was not only in registering new voters and informing them, but also in focusing on "real-life issues for the learners. By taking the focus off "reading and writing" as the purpose and make it the tool, the student interest increases.

Descriptors: (To be completed only by AdvancE staff)

Introduction

Project Learn to Vote is a demonstration project designed to empower adult learners by providing information on voting from a local, state, and federal election perspective. Our approach at the Lancaster-Lebanon Literacy Council (LLLC) is to give adult learners skills that ensure active participation in decisions directly affecting their lives. One of the most basic ways to participate in a community is to register to vote and exercise that right in local, state, and national elections. However, registering without being informed produces little satisfaction or involvement for the learner. There must be a component of sharing of information about the process and what is happening in a local perspective for a complete experience for the adult learner.

The Council surveyed its student population and determined that there were 350 individuals who had not voted in past five years. The reasons which were given were:

(1) not registered to vote,

(2) found process too confusing.

The Learn to Vote Project had two components. First, to develop and implement learner workshops on various aspects of voting such as registration, the voting location, and gaining information on candidates. Second, to conduct a "hands-on" session to deal with the confusing aspects of voting machines.

All aspects of this project were non-partisan. Our goal was to show the students enrolled in our program how they can become informed votes by applying the literacy skills they have developed. The project was conducted July 1, 1992 through June 30, 1993, and the learner workshops were conducted in September 1992 with follow-up sessions in April 1993.
A packet of information was compiled to give to learners who could not attend or who wanted to have printed material to refer to at tutoring sessions.

This report may be of interest to Adult Education Instructors, Adult Education Administrators, and Adult Learners who are interested in projects which will increase student involvement.

Mary Hohensee acted as the project director for the project . The staff member who coordinated the development of the workshops and hand-on voting sessions was Roberta Anderson. Ms. Hohensee and Ms. Anderson worked together to create an environment which would be relevant, but not condescending to the adult learners. It was with the help of the student support group and its leader, Alvin Cole, that materials and content were review for appropriateness. The team also was careful to be sure that all materials and events did not favor any particular political party or philosophy. Additional information on the project may be obtained from:

AdvancE
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Ed.
PA Dept. of Ed.
333 Market St.
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

Lancaster-Lebanon Literacy Council
38 W. King St.
Lancaster, PA 17603

The Problem

For the individuals involved in Adult Literacy Education, it become increasingly difficult to help students define and reach goals through which they can see real skill development, a sense of accomplishment, and obtain a sense of control over their learning situation. Project Learn to Vote was developed with these issues in mind.

During a survey of active adult learners enrolled in our program, the Council discovered that approximately 350 learners had not voted within the past five years. Through follow-up surveys two major reasons were cited: 1) not registered to vote and/or 2) fear of voting process because it is confusing.

These statistics are not surprising since our student population is primarily composed of individuals with a 0-5 reading level. However, we are always looking for ways to encourage our students to take responsibility in their lives. The key element was tying the positive student experience back to "literacy" and skills development. We felt this was necessary to support the mission of the organization and the project.

Goals and Objectives

It was the goal of Project Learn to Vote to increase student participation within their community through the voting process by helping students exercise the skills they were developing as part of their basic skills development.

This goal would be implemented by:

1) Development of 3 workshops which would pertain to various aspects of the voting process
   a) Why and when we must register to vote
   b) How our vote counts
   c) What local, state, and national officials are elected by voters. (Meet the candidates nite).
2) Conducting a "hands-on" learning session in which adult learners work with an actual voting machine to gain confidence in the mechanical process. This was done through role playing.

Procedures to attack the problem

The Council approached the problems by implementing the project in a systematic design where learner input via the support group was crucial. First, the staff defined the goals and content of the workshops listed above. The support group made recommendations which were integrated into the workshop plan. Next, we coordinated the workshop dates so both evening and day sessions would be offered. We held the right to cancel a workshop if less than 15 people were registered to attend.

We then recruited individual speakers to present at the workshop about local politics. The League of Women Voters assisted us in finding appropriate speakers.

The workshops were scheduled for the first four Thursdays of September. With the help of the student support group we organized a mailing to the adult learners and also to the Adult Basic Education Staff at IU-13. It was planned that they would bring students to the day sessions as a group. This would allow their students to take part without having to conduct the sessions as part of the Adult Ed program.

We also alerted the news media about the project, distributed flyers, and decorated the windows at the Lancaster center to gain additional attention.

Learners were encouraged to bring their tutor or come alone, and their were people there who could help them if they were not with a tutor. Exercises were presented which they had to complete during the session to help them practice the new skill.

Attendance was noted and all those who were not registered filled out registration cards during the first session. We were able to register 78 new voters at the sessions, and an additional 39 adult students through their tutors. These were individuals who could not attend the workshop, but who wanted to take part in the voting process.

During the November elections, student support group members arranged rides for adult students who needed transportation to the polls. This was done in collaboration with the League of Women Voters, but the student group was responsible for all the calling and follow-up work.

In April, we had a follow-up session in which students shared what they had learned and gained through the process of becoming a voter. During this session, we also received feedback from them regarding the project. Some students decided to become more active with our organization in letting the local representatives know about adult literacy issues and our organization. This was a benefit that was not anticipated by the Council.

Objectives and Results

The project was successful in meeting its objectives as stated in the earlier portion of this report. We were able to hold all workshops and we had 40 - 50 participants in all workshops held before the November elections. Some persons attended all sessions while others were interested in only the hands-on voting session and the information session where candidates spoke. The project staff believes that this still made the sessions effective for learners. However, the follow-up session that was held in the spring had poor attendance. This seems to have resulted due to such a long time span between the elections and the session.

The learners who attended participated actively, but attendance was lower--20 participants. The follow-up session was not scheduled for such a late date, but it had been cancelled twice due to weather problems. The session may be more successfully held a week or two after the election.

Evaluation and Conclusions

The feedback for the project was obtained directly from the workshop participants. An evaluation was completed by participants, and we asked questions directly to students in an effort to gain insight that they may not feel comfortable writing. The students were very favorable in their responses. They commented that they felt important at the workshops. The workshops were like workshops that anyone may attend--not just adult learners. One learner said, "It seemed as if my opinion mattered."

The staff, presenters, and staff said that they felt they were helping the adult learner do something positive for themselves, but everyone could relate it to skills they needed in everyday life.

Both staff and adult learners arrived at the conclusion that Adult Education Providers need to do more learning experiences, which are tied to the everyday needs of Learners. Workbooks and tests are fine, but the adult learners are faced with a battery of tests in their daily lives. It seems unnecessary to concoct artificial yardsticks to measure progress. Let us continue to be creative and use the situations that all adults must face. The learners who became new voters during the project told us that they felt a responsibility not only to vote, but also to know what they were voting for or against. One adult said, "I know how to vote now---I just need to read about it like everyone else."

THE Literacy Council OF LANCASTER-LEBANON

Lancaster: 38 West King Street, Lancaster, PA 17603 • 717-295-5523
Lebanon: 1 Cumberland Street, Lebanon, PA 17042 • 717-274-3461

Project Learn to Vote

a Special Workshop Series for Adult Learners

A 353 SPECIAL PROJECT

#98-3042

xxxx

THE Literacy Council OF LANCASTER-LEBANON

Lancaster: 38 West King Street, Lancaster, PA 17603 • 717-295-5523
Lebanon: 1 Cumberland Street, Lebanon, PA 17042 • 717-274-3461

Dear Adult Learner:

Welcome to the Literacy Council's Learn to Vote Workshops.

We will talk about ideas and you will learn some specific new skills.

If you have any questions, just raise your hand and a tutor will come to your table.

All the items in your folder will be discussed in the workshop. These papers are to help you review. You and your tutor can also use them in your lessons.

After the workshop, we will be asking you what you liked and didn't like. Please be honest---we need your input to make the workshops better for you.

Now let's get started and have some fun!

Project Learn to Vote

Register to vote Workshop 1

What do I have to do to be able to vote in Pennsylvania?

- **You must be a United States Citizen at least 30 days before election day.**
- **You must have lived in Pennsylvania, your County, and the District where you vote at least 30 days before election day. This means you are a resident.**
- **You must be at least 18 years old on the day after election day.**

Notes: _____

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Project Learn to Vote

Register to vote Workshop 1

Why must I register to vote?

Registration is proof that are who you say you are. There is a law that we must register before we can vote. Each person has only one vote in our country and registration helps make sure that you are not voting more than once.

How often must I register to vote?

You must re-register to vote if:

- **You move,**
- **You change Political Party and want to vote in the primary election,**
- **You have legally changed your name--for example: divorce, or marriage**
- **If you have not voted within the past two years.**

How do I find out where I vote?

If you voted before and have not moved, you will vote at the same polling place as before. If you don't know where to go to vote on election day, call the Lancaster Voter Registration Office 299-8293. These offices are located in the Lancaster County Court House. They will tell you where you must vote. Remember, you must vote in the district where you are registered.

Project Learn to Vote

Register to vote Workshop 1

What must I do to register?

You fill out the voter registration form, which is in your folder. If you need another form, you can get one at the post office, library, liquor store, or courthouse. You may mail it or return it in person to the voter registration office. You will get your voter registration card within 10 days. If you don't get the card, call the Voter Registration Office 299-8293. You will need to show this card when you vote.

Notes:_____

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Project Learn to Vote

Register to vote Workshop 1

Let's Fill Out the Form

The Voter Registration Form asks you questions about where you live, what you look like, and what political party you wish to register. The form looks very difficult. But there is no time limit to finish it---you can take it home and fill it out.

Let's Do It Together !

We will take each part and break it down. If you have any questions-- your tutor will be happy to help.

Okay---Ready, Set, Let's Get Started!

Project Learn to Vote

Register to vote Workshop 1

Let's Fill Out the Form

Part I

This question asks you why you are registering. These are the reasons we discussed earlier.

They are:

- **not registered before,**
- **change of name,**
- **change of political party, or**
- **change of address**

Check the correct box and go on:

Is This A: ☐ New Registration ☐ Change of Name
☐ Change of Address ☐ Change of Party

☐ I am a Federal or State employee and wish to retain my voting residence in the county where I last resided

OFFICIAL USE ONLY (6/92)

Project Learn to Vote

Register to vote Workshop 1

Let's Fill Out the Form

Part 2

This part asks for your full, legal name. You can't shorten Robert to Bob or Patricia to Pat. You should print the name that appears on other legal documents, such as your driver's license or passport.

Remember: Print, Use Ink, and Last Name First.

Let's Practice!

LAST NAME	FIRST (NO NICKNAMES)	INITIAL JR/SR

You need to tell them with which political party you want to register. This does not mean you must vote for that party, but you must pick a political party for the registration. If you don't pick a political party, you can not vote in the primary election, but can vote in the general election.

IN WHICH PARTY DO YOU WISH TO REGISTER?	☐ DEMOCRATIC	☐ other _____ specify
	☐ REPUBLICAN	☐ NO PARTY AFFILIATION

Project Learn to Vote

Register to vote Workshop 1

Let's Fill Out the Form

Part 3

Where do you live? That's what this part asks. You must give your full address. Thank means apartment number or post office box, if you have one. If you live in the country and are a rural route or box number, then list the cross road. This helps them identify your voting location.

FULL HOME ADDRESS (IMPORTANT: SEE INSTRUCTION #3)

ZIP CODE | CITY/BOROUGH/TOWNSHIP

Project Learn to Vote

Register to vote Workshop 1

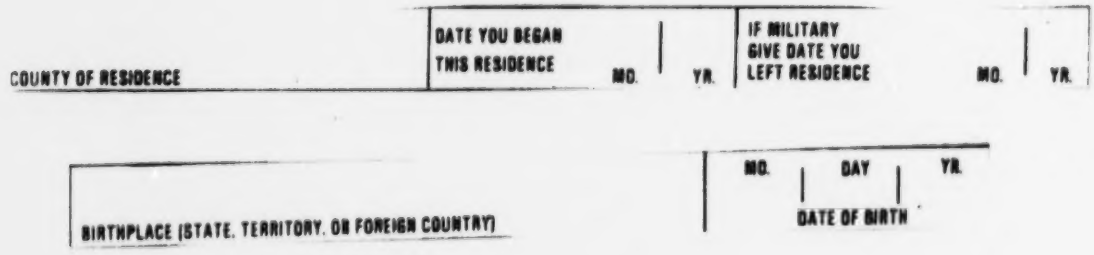
Let's Fill Out the Form

Part 4

What County do you live in and when did you move there?

Where were you born?--if you were born in another country you may be asked to show proof that you are a U.S. citizen.

You must give your date of birth by month, day, and year. Use numbers instead of words. (For example 05 19 54 means May 19, 1954)

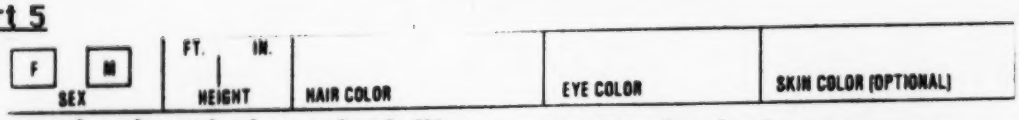


Project Learn to Vote

Register to vote Workshop 1

Let's Fill Out the Form

Part 5



This part asks what you look like -- or you physical appearance.

Sex--- F (female)

M (male)

Height -- In feet and inches

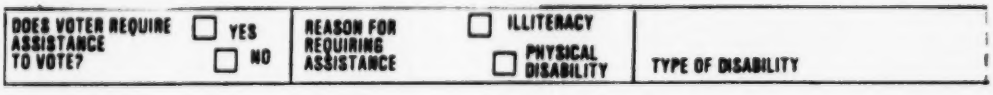
Hair color---this should be the color we see not your natural color.

For example, if you have brown hair, but color it blonde fill in "Blonde".

Skin Color--You do not have to fill-in this space. It is optional.

Do you require someone to go into the voting booth with you?

This question asks if you need assistance. If you have a physical disability or need help reading the ballot you need to let them know. This will make sure they have an extra person to assist you on election day. Answering yes to this question does not mean you can not vote---it means they will need to give you help.



Project Learn to Vote

Register to vote Workshop 1

Let's Fill Out the Form

Part 6 and 7

This part asks if you have ever been registered to vote before. If so, where and when?

IF YOU HAVE EVER REGISTERED TO VOTE BEFORE, GIVE YEAR OF LAST REGISTRATION	YEAR STREET	CITY, BORO. or TWP.

What name was listed on your last registration? Give full name.

NAME ON LAST REGISTRATION

If you have never been registered to vote--don't fill in parts 6 and 7.

LAST REGISTRATION COUNTY	STATE	ZIP CODE

Project Learn to Vote

Register to vote Workshop 1

Let's Fill Out the Form

Part 8

Name and address of person assisting in completion of this form.

If someone fill-out the form, you must give their name and address. It is okay if you needed help. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON ASSISTING IN COMPLETION OF THIS FORM

Other Points:

You must sign the registration form. If you can only make an "H" as your signature, you must get the form notarized. This will cost you around $5.00.

REGISTRATION DECLARATION I hereby declare that I am a citizen of the United States, that on the day of the next ensuing primary or election, I shall be at least eighteen years of age, and shall have resided in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and in the election district thirty days, that I am legally qualified to vote, that I affirm that the information provided herein is true and correct, and I fully understand that this application will be accepted for all purposes as the equivalent of an affidavit, and if it contains a material false statement, shall be subject to the same penalties for perjury as if I had been duly sworn.

PENALTY FOR FALSE DECLARATION

If any person shall sign an official registration application card knowing any statement declared therein to be false, he shall be guilty of perjury, and upon conviction, shall be sentenced to pay a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars ($1,000), or be imprisoned for a term not exceeding five (5) years or both, at the discretion of the court. In addition, sentence shall include loss of the right of suffrage absolutely for a term of ten (10) years.

SIGNATURE MUST APPEAR IN BOX - NOT PRINTED NAME

X

X

PRINTED NAME OF APPLICANT PHONE NO.

Project Learn to Vote

What Happens When We Vote

Workshop 2

Welcome Back!

Tonight we will be sharing ideas about what happens when we vote.

We will be asking what you think about the following areas:

What is the purpose of voting?

America is a democracy---what does this mean to you?

Is the two party system a good idea?---How could it be better?

The Purpose of Your Vote

In the United States, citizens over 18 are allowed to vote. But only about 50% do vote. Why does this happen? Some people say, "My vote doesn't count", or "Politics is bad! Why should I take the time."

Does voting mean anything to you? Many people have gone to jail for the right to vote in America. In 1872, Susan B. Anthony led women in a march to get the right to vote. At that time, women could not vote in the United States in federal elections. When they tried to vote, they were put in jail. Women kept fighting to win the right to vote. Fifty (50) years later they were given this right.

African American men could not vote until 1870, but many states passed laws taxing the right to vote to keep blacks from voting. These black Americans knew that voting was power and risked their lives to vote.

Today in America, we are lucky. The Constitution guarantees you the right to vote in all kinds of elections. Your vote is equal to any other vote. You do have to do a few simple things in order to vote. But no one can turn you away because of your race, sex, background, or religion or because you don't have money or own land.

America - A Democracy

The United States is a democracy. That means you get a chance to choose the people who represent you. You don't vote on every issue, but you vote on who will represent you in government. You have power over what the government does through your vote. If you can't vote or you don't vote, you lose your best chance to have a say in what your government does.

When people in America have not had the right to vote, their lives were run by a government that did not represent them. When Americans have gained the right to vote all problems do not disappear. But they still thought this right was worth fighting for.

The Two-Party System

There have been two political parties in the United States since George Washington was President. It began because Thomas Jefferson felt that all people should be able to take part in their government. Alexander Hamilton felt that the upper class should rule.

These two parties were the Democratic-Republican Party and the Federalist Party. Since the Civil War, there has been the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. There have been many other smaller Parties. Today independent parties are becoming more vocal. The "We the People" Party who supported Ross Perot for President has become very active. Some people think this is good and others think it will hurt democracy.

The important idea is not the political party, but the ideas of the candidates. The candidates are individuals and the differences between ideas are what good voters care about.

Let's spend some time talking about these issues.....

Project Learn to Vote

Meeting Officials Night

Workshop 3

Welcome!

Tonight we will be meeting some of our elected officials

Mayor Janice Stork---Lancaster city

Noah Wenger -- 36th District State Senator

James Huber -- County Commissioner

Ron Ford -- City Councilman

These persons are here to describe their offices. None are running for office. They are not here to represent any political party, but to talk about what it means to be elected and to serve the people.

LEARN TO VOTE EVALUATION:

Was this workshop what you expected?

What helped you the most?

If you could change the workshop what would you change?

Should the Council have more workshops like this? Why or Why Not?

Project Learn to Vote

Meeting Officials Night

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ALL WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS RECEIVED A COPY OF:

Becoming and Informed Citizen: Steck-Vaughn Publisher

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